



PTILOTIS PLUMULUS: Gould

PTILOTIS PLUMULUS, *Gould.*

Plumed Ptilotis.

Ptilotis plumulus, Gould in Proc. of Zool. Soc. November 10, 1840.

THE double tuft of black and yellow feathers situated on the sides of the neck suggested the name of *plumulus* for this species, whose range of habitat appears to be confined to the western portions of Australia, specimens never having been seen in any of the numerous collections from the southern or from the north-west coast: had it advanced so far to the eastward as the Belts of the Murray, in all probability I should have discovered it, while investigating that region. In size it is rather less than *Ptilotis ornatus*, and, independently of the accessory black tuft on the sides of the neck, the breast is of a more delicate and paler colour, with the feathers much more faintly marked with brown down the centre. All the specimens I have were collected in the district of York, about 60 miles eastward of Swan River, where it inhabits the white-gum forests, resorting to the tops of the highest trees, and is seldom to be seen on the ground. Its note is much varied, consisting of a loud shrill shake, somewhat resembling the sportman's pea-whistle, continued without intermission for a great length of time. When disturbed it flits among the branches with a quick darting flight; while at other times, like the Miners (genus *Myzantha*), it soars from tree to tree with the most graceful and easy movement.

Its small, elegant, cup-shaped nest is suspended from a slender horizontal branch, frequently so close to the ground as to be reached by the hand; it is formed of dried grasses lined with soft cotton-like buds of flowers. The breeding-season continues from October to January; the eggs being two in number, ten lines long by seven lines broad, of a pale salmon colour, with a zone of a deeper tint at the larger end, and the whole freckled with minute spots of a still darker hue. The stomach is diminutive and slightly muscular, the food consisting of insects and honey.

The sexes appear to present no difference in the colour of their plumage; but the female, as is the case with the other members of the genus, is considerably smaller than her mate.

Crown of the head and all the upper surface bright olive-yellow, approaching to grey on the back; lores black; ear-coverts, throat and under surface pale yellowish grey, faintly striated with a darker tint; behind the ear two tufts, the upper of which is narrow and black; the lower, which is more spread over the sides of the neck, of a beautiful yellow; primaries and tail-feathers brown, margined with bright olive-yellow; irides very dark reddish brown; bill black; legs and feet apple-green.

The figures are male and female of the natural size, on one of the Acacias of Western Australia.